

VZCZCXYZ0006  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #1404/01 1750245  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 240245Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5344  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 6258  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3059  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 4043  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 4188  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 2168  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1768  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 5558

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001404

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN: CITIZENS CONTINUE TO LACK CONFIDENCE IN  
PARLIAMENT AS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION BEGINS

REF: A. AMMAN 1339

[B](#). 08 AMMAN 3335

[C](#). 08 AMMAN 1984

[D](#). 08 AMMAN 1030

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Public confidence in parliament remains very low according to several polls released recently. Two polls showed that less than 13 percent of Jordanians were satisfied with the performance of the current lower house of parliament and 81 percent could not name a single parliamentary achievement. Citizens continue to focus on the economy but nearly half of the respondents rate parliament's ability to deal with these challenges as very poor. The polls have been referenced by those calling for parliamentary reform. In contrast, Prime Minister Dababi's government maintained a high approval with a 62 percent satisfaction rate. Polling has also pointed to significant youth disenfranchisement. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) The following polls are referenced in this cable:

--May 2009 Parliament Approval Survey of 1,764 adults nationwide by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies (CSS).

--May 2009 Government Approval Survey of 1,175 adults nationwide by CSS.

--March 2009 Parliament and the Electoral Law Opinion Poll of 1,200 adults nationwide by the Al-Quds Center for Political Studies with support from the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

--January 2009 Youth Survey of 2,000 youth ages 18 - 30 nationwide conducted by CSS.

Parliament Posts Low Approval Ratings  
-----

[3](#). (C) As parliament started an extraordinary session on June 11, recent polling points to a lack of public confidence in both the institution and its members. A study released on May 28 by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) showed that 56 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of parliament as an institution with only ten percent reporting full satisfaction. Likewise, only 13 percent were happy with the performance of their individually elected parliamentarians and a similarly low number believe that parliament exercised its duties with full independence from the government. A

March poll conducted by Al-Quds showed similar numbers (8.9% satisfied versus 29% not satisfied). The studies have prompted some calls to reform parliament.

#### What Have You Done for Me Lately?

-----

¶4. (C) The Al-Quds poll shows the main concern of citizens is the economy instead of political reform or human rights. High prices (34.3%), unemployment (21.7%), poverty (17%), low wages (7.7%), and administrative and financial corruption (5.4%) were the five highest ranked priorities. Political reform, democratic transition, and public freedoms registered at 1 percent or less. Citizens also clearly voiced their opinion that parliament is incapable of addressing economic issues. Nearly half rated Parliament's performance on addressing economic issues as very poor compared to a low 3.7 percent who believe performance was very good.

¶5. (C) Seventy-nine percent of respondents in the CSS poll believe that MPs are concerned about their personal interest and that of their own tribe instead of the country as a whole. Yet more troubling for MPs is that 81 percent of respondents were unable to name any achievement of the current Parliament. The Al-Quds poll, however, indicates that MPs are paying little attention to public outreach and citizen interaction. The overwhelming majority - 88.6 percent - had no interaction with their representative since the last election in 2007.

¶6. (C) Three of four respondents to the CSS parliament poll stated that MPs are "rubber stamps" in support of government policies and a similar number believe they are easily pressured and coerced by the government. (Note: With the belief that MPs are unable to satisfactorily perform their roles, it is unclear if greater independence would result in improved parliamentary ratings. End Note.)

#### Consistently High Ratings for Dahabi Government

-----

¶7. (C) In stark contrast to Parliament, Prime Minister Dahabi's government has maintained high approval ratings despite rumors that a change in government may be forthcoming. The CSS poll showed that 62 percent of the general public believes the government is capable and is carrying out its responsibilities. This percentage is consistent with findings immediately after the start of the Dahabi government and 100 days after its formations (Ref A-C). The Dahabi government is now 18 months old - a relatively long period for a government in Jordan. (Note: Contacts have stated the avoidance of any major, controversial social or political reforms is behind the government's relatively high and flat approval ratings and may help prolong its existence, if only for a few additional months. End Note)

#### Youth Avoiding Public Participation; Not Stepping Up

-----

¶8. (C) Significant youth disenfranchisement and a lack of public participation have also been quantified in CSS polling. Just as the citizenry believe their elected officials look primarily after their self interests, 60 percent of youth believe that success and upward mobility does not depend on personal effort but rather on connections and family status. Another 71 percent claim that they are not able to freely and publically express themselves. (Note: Also of note in the youth survey are the apparent low levels of Jordanian national pride and a divide between East Bankers and Palestinians. More youth first view themselves as Muslim (34%) compared to Jordanian (31%) and one in four youth believe that the greatest rift in Jordan is between East Bankers and Palestinians. Contacts tell us that the low level of national identity stems from the youths' perception that there is a lack of economic, social and political opportunity in Jordan. Unless one is well-connected, it is difficult to envision a long-term, prosperous future. End Note)

Comment

-----

19. (C) Comment: Parliament routinely receives low approval ratings from a public unhappy about their inability to perform even the few responsibilities and policymaking authorities they have now. Calls for an overhaul of parliament through sweeping electoral reform measures have become routine, with many citing low approval ratings as evidence that reform is needed. Yet there is not enough of a groundswell to push this reform, as most citizens focus more on the economy than political restructuring. End Comment.

Visit Amman's Classified Website at  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman>  
Beecroft